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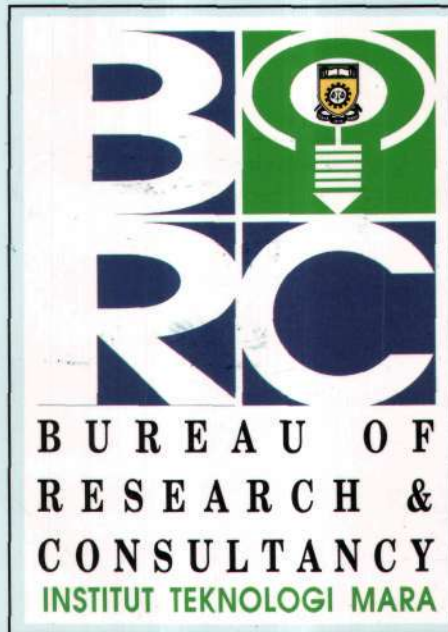
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THE EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF EAST COAST BUMIPUTRA STUDENTS

by
Zamri Mohd Noor

ABSTRACT

This study of the academic performance of bumiputra students on the East Coast was undertaken in order to examine aspects which can help in promoting academic excellence among East Coast bumiputra students. The socio-economic aspect was adopted as the basis of the study, with emphasis on factors such as environment, family income, and motivation or determination to succeed.

Overall, this study covered bumiputra students in secondary schools – both fully aided government schools and private ones – teacher training colleges, and institutions of higher learning, whose students passed the SPM examination in 1989. A small number of people now working, who also passed SPM in the same year, was also included in the study sample.

A total of 3,000 respondents were covered in the study, representing all groups of bumiputra students on the East Coast, with selection being based on the cluster sampling method. A structural questionnaire was employed to obtain the necessary data, using an SPSS/pc + package.

All questionnaire forms were distributed personally to the respondents, with even distribution between all East Coast states.

Keywords: Educational Performance, Bumiputra Students, Terengganu, SPM.



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OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study consists of two parts:

(i) The General Objective

To provide feedback concerning the variables which have an influence on the academic performance of bumiputra students on the East Coast.

(ii) The Specific Objective

- a) To identify the variables which have the greatest influence or effect on academic achievement.
- b) To classify and provide a well integrated understanding of each variable, and come up with meaningful conclusions regarding it.
- c) To consider the students' own views about the academic programmes they experienced at school or at college.
- d) To offer proposals concerning education planning and development in Malaysia to certain parties, especially the Ministry of Education.

THE METHODOLOGY

This study identified various areas of research which were deemed potentially beneficial. All questions were first studied, then selected as factors.

The number of respondents chosen to participate in the research totalled 3,000, and these were considered to comprise the majority of the students who sat for and passed the SPM examination in 1989. The method of selection adopted was cluster sampling method. This was achieved by dividing the students into groups of similar individuals, so that the random factor would be effectively ensured.

Collection of data was carried out personally by the researchers, and before the actual collection was initiated a pilot study was made in order to ensure that the real study would run according to plan. Most of the questions in the questionnaire were of the closed-end type, to facilitate quantitative analysis of the data.

The information obtained was then fed into a computer using an SPSS/PC + programme. This programme was selected for its ability to test the factors and subsequently deliver a summary or overview of the whole study.

Analysis of the study was divided into a number of sections:-

- a) biodata
- b) passing profile
- c) economy
- d) environment
- e) culture/sports

The reason for making this division was to examine in more detail, both quantitatively and qualitatively, which are the factors in each category that influence the educational achievement of the respondents. In this section, counting was carried out in terms of gross total and also percentage (based on the figure of 3,000 respondents).

The process of analysis was also divided into two parts:-

- a) statistical analysis
- b) programmed analysis

The two methods together were deemed suitable to provide clear and meaningful information concerning the factors which affect East Coast students' academic performance.

a) Statistical Analysis

The data gathered was analysed statistically, using the "F Test", the "T Test" and the "Chi-square".

The "F Test" was used to define the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables.

The "T Test" was used to test each of the independent variables to find out whether it was significant or not.

The "Chi-square" was employed to ascertain whether or not the control variables which had been determined (the grade and the number of credits obtained) were related to the other variables which were evaluated in the study.

b) Programmed Analysis

All the data obtained from the questionnaires was combined together to form the source of data for computer-aided analysis. The processing of the data involved using files of data consisting of the feedback from the respondents; then the SPSS/PC + software was imposed on it in order to obtain information that was relevant and meaningful, such as cross-tabulation, percentage distributions, averages and other values which were employed in the study.

The detailed methods of processing involved the following:-

- a) Distribution of SPM grades.
- b) Distribution of SPM credits.

The distribution of SPM grades covered grades 1, 2 and 3 only.

The distribution of SPM credits was divided into three levels:-

- a) 3 – 4 credits
- b) 5 – 6 credits
- c) 7 – 9 credits

FINDINGS

Based on the analysis of the study, it was found that overall the academic achievement of East Coast bumiputra students is influenced by a number of socio-economic factors. One of the factors which was found to influence their performance is the type of school attended by the students.

The types of school referred to here are either fully-aided government schools or private schools. Overall, it was the fully-aided government schools which showed good performance. The reason for this is that the majority of private school students consist of those who are weak in their studies and are repeating the exams. There is also a strong possibility that facilities provided in private schools are unable to match those in government schools.

Besides this, other factors, such as quantum of monthly expenditure whilst studying, are also seen to play a role. The students' monthly expenditure for purposes of studying demonstrates a correlation to academic achievement. However, if the money is spent instead for other purposes, the effect is the opposite.

Good examination results are not influenced by expenditure alone, but also by where the students live. It was found that the area where students resides does have an effect on academic performance. The study revealed that students living in interior areas face a situation where infrastructure is very lacking. If, on the other hand, the students live near to a town, the time taken to get to school would almost certainly be less.

The distance between home and school was seen to have a positive correlation to academic achievement. Students who live close to their school achieve better results than those who live further away. Of the students who passed the 1989 SPM exam, 80% lived between 1 – 10 km from their schools, whilst the remaining 20% lived more than 10 km away. The greater distance means that the students face more difficulty in obtaining transport, and also take longer to reach the school. This factor in turn has an effect on the way the students travel to school.

The mode of transport to and from school also has a positive effect on the students' academic performance. The results of the study showed the students who walked to school achieved an impressive pass rate of 42.5%. Of the remainder, 33.4% travelled by bus, 6.0% by car, 5.6% by motorcycle, and 1.6% used other means of transport. Students who travelled by bicycle, motorcycle or car did not achieve a satisfactory performance, possibly because the travelling itself was tiring and also diversions to other places were made on the way to school. Where a rather long journey is involved, this results in reduction of time available for study and revision.

It was found that usually the amount of time spent on revision has a direct bearing on the examination results achieved. Students who spent more time on revision obtained better results than those who spent less time. Of the students who obtained good results, 51% spent more than 2 hours a day on revision, 39.8% spent 1-2 hours, and 8.7% less than 1 hour.

Nowadays extra classes and tuition are becoming very common, being available almost everywhere, and this facility does play a role in helping the students to prepare for their exams. From the analysis of the study, it was found that students who attend such classes were more likely to obtain better exam results. Parents who can afford it are more than willing to give their children the chance to attend these classes.

Support and encouragement from the family play an important part in the academic achievement of the students, acting as the prime motivating force. The influence of parents and teachers represents the greatest contributory factor in the enhancement of academic achievement. Out of the students who obtained good passes, 91% attributed it to encouragement from parents, and 4.0% to encouragement from teachers. Besides parents, siblings also have an effect on a student's examination results, and this is demonstrated by the fact that the more siblings in the family who further their studies at institutions of higher learning, the greater is the student's motivation to succeed.

How seriously parents take their children's education, and how often they checked their school-work, contribute directly to this encouragement to improve performance. The study analysis showed that 70% of the students who excelled in their studies did so because of constant parental supervision of their school-work. Only 2.0% of the high achievers reported the absence of parental or family supervision or interest.

The students' position in the order of siblings was also shown to have a bearing on the level of their achievement. From the results of the analysis, students who were the eldest in the family were seen to excel in their studies. Of this category, 20% obtained grades one and two. There may be various reasons for this, such as more attention from parents, a sense of responsibility towards younger siblings, and a desire to be a role-model to the younger children, setting a standard which the latter are unable to supercede.

Usually the intelligent siblings in a family will inspire the others to try and follow in their footsteps. The study demonstrated that most students who excelled have brothers or sisters who have continued their studies up to university level.

Besides the influence of the family, facilities such as public libraries also have a bearing on student performance. The location of a public library near their homes can improve the students' academic achievement. Out of the students who obtained grade one for SPM, 31.5% made use of a public library to enhance what they learned at school. From this it can also be concluded that these students succeed in augmenting their knowledge by referring to reading materials which were perhaps unavailable at their schools.

Reading of other materials besides school books is considered important, since it represents a part of informal education outside the classroom. Over 90% of the respondents in the study used such an opportunity to increase their knowledge, with around 30% employing magazines as their source of reading material. An additional factor which is related to the above is the amount of time spent reading non-school reading materials, which was seen to contribute towards enhancing the students' knowledge as well as improve their academic achievement level. The amount of time spent reading non-school materials showed a positive effect on their performance in their studies. Of the students who obtained grade one, 24.1% spent between half to one hour daily on such reading, and of those who obtained grade 2, 29.7% spent the same amount of time.

Viewed overall, the statistics show that the majority of students who achieved good examination results regularly spent between half to one hour on such additional reading. The time factor can produce similar positive effects if it is spent on other beneficial activities besides reading.

Programmed extra-mural activities also provide an important contribution towards academic excellence. Activities such as sports, clubs and recreation were clearly seen to be a positive influence, with 70.0% of the high-calibre students participating in such activities. Sports emerged as the most popular activity, with 42.7% of those involved in the study favouring it.

Besides the activities already mentioned, entertainment also features as a spare-time activity which can affect studies in a positive way. The electronic mass media such as television were clearly very popular with the students. They watched not only entertainment programmes but also educational and knowledge-enhancing ones.

Choice of television channel was based on the type of programme and the language in which it was presented. Overall, the study showed that more than 90% of the students liked to watch television, with 50% of them preferring TV3, 40% TV1, and the remainder TV2.

From this it can be seen that the preference of the majority of the students was for TV3 and TV1. However, the factor which renders television an aid towards achieving good performance does not depend only on the type of programmes preferred, but also on the amount of time spent on this activity.

If too much time is spent watching television, this will have a detrimental effect on the students' pass-rate. The study showed that watching television for between 1 to 4 hours

a day provides the optimum stimulus for obtaining good examination results: students following this practice achieved between 3 and 9 credits each. In general, it can be observed that exercising moderation in terms of time spent watching television can enhance student performance.

The same basic principles apply also to listening to the radio. Overall, most students enjoyed this activity, too.

Once again, the optimum level of listening to the radio is between 1 to 4 hours a day, and this was shown by the study which found that 35.4% of those who adopted this practice obtained grade one with a good number of credits.

The factors outlined above represent the main driving forces which contribute towards excellence in bumiputra students' academic performance. The importance of the implications of these factors in the total pattern of student performance has been taken into consideration. Certain values present in the condition of the living environment, in sports and cultural activities, in economic and related conditions of each individual have an influence on, and contribute towards the enhancement of, his or her academic performance. It is clear that there is a close relationship between certain of these factors and academic performance, as has been shown. These relationships represent an important starting point for working towards upgrading the educational development of East Coast bumiputra students.

Whilst in this study, a total of 19 factors has been found statistically to have a bearing on bumiputra students' academic performance in the East Coast states, this does not exclude the possibility of there being yet other factors which may similarly have an influence.